



**SOUTH AREA PARKS AND RECREATION DEPARTMENT**  
*South County Boat Ramp Referendum Committee*

**PUBLIC MEETING**  
March 28, 2006

A public meeting of the Parks and Recreation Department, South County Boat Ramp Referendum Committee, was held on Tuesday, March 28, 2006, 6:00 p.m., at the Grant Community Center, Grant, Florida.

**MEMBERS PRESENT**

Ron Rincones  
Jamie Seymour  
Albert Malerk  
Michael Rowland  
Duane Ball  
Mike Cunningham

**MEMBERS ABSENT**

VACANT (replacing Robin Tibbitts)

**STAFF PRESENT**

Jack Masson, Deputy Director, Parks and Recreation  
Greg Minor, Construction Manager, Parks and Recreation  
Marsha Cantrell, Parks Support Services Manager  
Jeff Whitehead, South Area Parks Operations Manager  
Jerry Gust, South Area Parks Maintenance Superintendent  
Denny Bert, Supervisor, South Mainland Area  
Floyd Jesmer, Parks Maintenance Technician, South Mainland Area  
Lisa Nicholas, South Area Administrative Secretary

**PUBLIC**

Attached.

**MEETING CALL TO ORDER**

Mr. Rowland called the meeting to order at 6:10 p.m. and introduced himself and thanked the public, Committee members, staff and representatives from Coastal Tech for attending. Mr. Whitehead introduced staff present from Parks and Recreation.

**STAFF REPORTS**

Mr. Minor indicated that the bids for demolishing the remaining Couch Pump structures would be opened on April 6, 2006, and that there would be a 5-day protest period. A Notice to Proceed should be issued in mid-April and it will take approximately 40 days to complete the demolition. There are some asbestos concerns, but Mr. Minor noted that, for the most part, the site should be cleaned by the end of May.

**OLD BUSINESS**

Ms. Cantrell reported that, because the property had been acquired through eminent domain, it took some additional time. Ms. Cantrell explained that a "quick-take" approach was

utilized, meaning that the County was able to assume title to the property more swiftly because of not having to wait for numerous appraisals. Environmental testing was ongoing, and an asbestos assessment was being conducted. Negotiations had been transpiring with Michael Walther from Coastal Tech.

## NEW BUSINESS

Michael Walther from Coastal Tech presented a conceptual plan for the site and explained that many locations were explored for the construction of a boat launch and indicated that numerous elements rendered Couch Pump the most feasible site. Mr. Walther stated that the conceptual plan being presented could be revised and noted that construction could more than likely begin within a year but that a tremendous amount of permitting was involved and that would be very time consuming.

Mr. Walther introduced Jeff Birmingham from Coastal Tech, who referred to a large drawing of a site plan. There would be a circular pattern for driving, and boats would be backed onto the ramps. There would be a lot of pavement and therefore a large retention area would be needed for runoff. Amenities would include a restroom building, pavilion and picnic area, and at least 20 feet of buffer as required by County Code. A requirement of the state Manatee Plan is that a limit of 50 paved parking spaces must be imposed.

Mr. Seymour indicated that this was the first time the Committee had seen such a plan and that the pitfalls were that the design did not contain enough ramps, there was too much fluff and the retention area was too large. Fifty parking spaces would not be sufficient, and the picnic area and dumpster would not be necessary. Mr. Seymour also noted that it would be a shame for the County to have all of this property and be confined to 50 parking spaces.

Mr. Seymour then noted that there were only two ramps, and Mr. Whitehead responded that the ramps were double ramps and there were actually four ramps. Mr. Rowland noted that each ramp was approximately 30 feet wide and asked whether that would be wide enough for public use because there were many amateur boaters that would potentially be using the facility. Mr. Seymour stated that T-docks were necessary, and Mr. Rowland asked if another T-dock could be installed. Mr. Rincones stated that additional provisions would be necessary for cars and suggested perhaps not paving the entire surface and asked if allowing parking on an unpaved surface would count toward the 50 allocated parking spaces.

Mr. Rowland asked about funding, and Ms. Cantrell responded that the project had received a \$100,000 grant and that staff had also applied for a Florida Inland Navigation District (FIND) grant. Additional moneys (approximately \$800,000) are generated through tag registrations. Moneys originally allocated to the project are still available.

Mr. Rincones noted that a several-hundred foot southbound deceleration lane would be required, and staff responded that the Florida Department of Transportation and Traffic Engineering would be responsible for implementing something like that.

Mr. Seymour reiterated that 50 parking spaces was not an adequate amount and stated that the Court must have felt there was enough public need for this facility if it went through the eminent domain process. Ms. Cantrell indicated that it was a "friendly take" and that the owners did not protest. Mr. Rowland noted that it was important to let Mr. Walther revise the conceptual plan based on the comments received and, in the meantime, go with the 50 parking spaces that are available and attempt to work on that issue in the future.

## PUBLIC INPUT

The following comments were received from members of the public:

- A resident that lives north of the property stated that cars already get backed up on U.S. Highway 1 and that it presents a dangerous situation. She is unable to get in and out of her driveway, and a 20-foot buffer will not be adequate. She feels that her property value will decrease because of having that facility at the edge of her dock. In addition, she stated that she has never seen a quiet boat ramp facility.
- An individual living just south of the property stated that he would like to see at least a wall constructed as a buffer.
- A resident living on Avenue C is also concerned about safety and would like to see a traffic study done to see if a light is warranted at First Street or perhaps a lower speed limit. People driving in that area who are from out of town are not aware of the traffic situation.
- A resident of Grant Island has concerns with having the facility constructed at all and stated there are parks everywhere and wanted to know why the County was inviting everyone into Grant. The traffic is not welcome.
- Another individual from Grant Island expressed concerns about safety and stated that there is no protection in that area and that the Coast Guard should make the area a no-wake zone.
- A Grant resident stated that she had concerns with the design of the ramps, noting that double ramps more often than not end up becoming single ramps.
- An individual residing just south of Couch Pump said he felt that the construction of the boat ramp is necessary for safety because the current situation is dangerous. Fifty spaces would be more than adequate.
- A resident of Grant Road thanked the Committee and Parks and Recreation staff and stated that the project was great. The individual suggested that the ramps should be as wide as possible and that T-docks are important because patrons can get their stuff without blocking the ramps and recommended that staff explore the facility at Ft. Pierce.
- Another individual stated that the area is growing and that a ramp is necessary. The person also stated that it would be a good idea to purchase the property directly across U.S. Highway 1 and install a traffic light. If inexperienced people are towing large boats, then parking should be across the street. Ms. Cantrell noted that, in the beginning, the County did contemplate acquiring the property across the street, but not now.
- A resident of Grant indicated that the ramps need to be longer and stronger because they will undergo a lot of wear and tear.
- A resident stated that the piers definitely have to be at least 60 feet to 100 feet long.

- A Grant resident asked if there had been any samples taken to see what is actually in the water and would the demolition include cleanup in the water. Ms. Cantrell responded that the testing that had been done revealed that there was a need for additional testing.
- A Satellite Beach resident extended thanks to Parks and Recreation staff for taking on the project and stated that many people do not realize what conditions have to be met for installation of a boat ramp and that we are lucky just to be able to have a place to put it.
- A resident of Grant stated that no matter how much parking is available, only 50 boats can go in the water.
- A Valkaria resident noted that, when the ramp becomes full at John Jorgenson's, people will park off to the side of the road, thereby creating a safety hazard.
- A Malabar resident suggested that perhaps non-County residents could be charged a fee to use the ramp and noted that the ramp is necessary because there are few places to launch.

Mr. Rowland then sought input from Committee members:

- Mr. Malerk said that the plan, as set forth, would not be efficient because of the safety concerns and the need for additional ramps. The ramps should be longer and wider and there should be T-docks. The primary concern should be safety. The 20-foot buffer could be turned into a wall.
- Mr. Ball suggested putting in extra parking for non-trailer vehicles and moving the restroom building closer to the boat ramp.

Mr. Walther indicated that it would take approximately one month to modify the plan and incorporate the requested adjustments.

#### ADJOURNMENT

Seeing no further business, Mr. Rowland adjourned the meeting of the South County Boat Ramp Referendum Committee at 7:30 p.m. and noted that the next meeting would be held on May 17, 2006, 6:00 p.m., at the Grant Community Center.